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## **Statement on National Suicide Awareness Week Danna Mauch, PhD, Chairman of SADD**

**Marlborough, Mass.** – In response to the continuing high rate of suicide among teens and in conjunction with National Suicide Prevention Awareness Week (September 4 – 10) and Global Suicide Awareness Day on September 10, 2011, I wish to remind parents, educators and peers that much can be done and is being done to address this serious issue. Youth suicidal behavior is a significant national problem. The extent of suicidal behavior — including thoughts of and plans for suicide, nonfatal suicide attempts, and suicide deaths — is daunting. Suicide is the third leading cause of death for 10- to 24-year-olds, killing 4320 young people in 2007, the most recent year from which statistics are available. Male youth die by suicide five times more frequently than female youth although females attempt suicide more frequently than males (8.1% of high school females vs. 4.6 % of males). The majority of youth who died by suicide used firearms (45 percent of deaths); suffocation was the second most commonly used method (38 percent). 6.3 percent of high school students self-reported having attempted suicide one or more times in the previous 12 months. 13.8 percent reported having seriously considered attempting suicide in the previous 12 months. (CDC statistics, [http://www.suicidology.org/c/document\\_library/get\\_file?folderId=232&name=DLFE-335.pdf](http://www.suicidology.org/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=232&name=DLFE-335.pdf)). The Journal of Pediatrics reported in 2009 that adolescents who frequently experience victimization by peers are more likely to report suicidal ideation and suicidal behavior, and those who had been threatened or injured by a peer were 2.4 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts and 3.3 times more likely to report suicidal behavior than their non-victimized counterparts (Kaminski and Fang, 2009).

As is the case with so many public health problems, youth suicide is often preventable. Saving young lives at risk involves a diverse range of interventions including effective assessment and treatment of those with mental disorders, promotion of help-seeking, early detection of and support for youth in crisis, preventive training in life skills, and reduction of access to lethal means.

As the nation's leading peer-to-peer youth education, prevention, and activism organization, SADD provides students with the tools and resources they need to make healthy choices and help their friends and peers to do the same. SADD is an inclusive organization, representing students from all aspects of high school life. SADD has partnered with the Ad Council and SAMHSA in promoting the groundbreaking "We Can Help Us" (<http://us.reachout.com/wecanhelpus/>), giving teens a place to share their stories about depression and thoughts of suicide. Through campaigns and activities addressing bullying, LGBT issues, dating violence, and substance abuse, SADD students aim to help each other deal with the pressures of daily teen life.

For more information about SADD, visit [sadd.org](http://sadd.org). Excellent resources about suicide prevention, intervention and research, including ways to identify suicide risk and take appropriate action can be found at the American Association of Suicidology website, [www.suicidology.org](http://www.suicidology.org).

Kaminski, J.W. & Fang, X. (2009). Victimization by peers and adolescent suicide in three U.S. Samples. *The Journal of Pediatrics*. (155)5, 683-688.

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*Danna Mauch, PhD, serves as national chairman of SADD, Inc. (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and has more than 30 years of experience in designing, implementing and managing research, clinical, and administrative services in the specialty health arena. Dr. Mauch is principal scientist/associate at Abt Associates Inc. and was a member of the SAMHSA National Advisory Council, the White House Conference and the Surgeon General's Task Force on Mental Health.*